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CAP WITH OPENING IN FRONT

Cross-Reference to Related Application

This application is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 10/116,976, filed April 4, 2002 and entitled “Cap with Opening In Front” which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/963,476, filed September 13, 2001, which is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/964,076, filed November 3, 1997 which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/600,344, filed February 13, 1996, all of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

Background and Summary of the Invention

This invention relates generally to headwear such as caps for wearing on a head, and more particularly it concerns a brimmed cap provided with an unoccluded opening in or near the front for contemporaneously providing shade for a wearer's eyes and face, and allowing an accumulation of the wearer's bangs to extend through the opening.

Hats provided with openings for allowing a wearer's hair to extend therethrough are known. For example, U.S. Patent No. 5,321,854 to Kronenberger discloses a head wear piece in the form of a baseball hat which has a bill joined to a crown configured to accommodate the head of a wearer. When in place on a wearer's head, the bill faces forwardly and an opening in the back of the hat is provided for allowing an accumulation of hair to pass therethrough and extend in a pony-tail fashion.

While Kronenberger attempts to solve the problem of enabling an individual with an accumulation of hair to wear a baseball hat, the attempt falls short of providing a truly versatile hat because Kronenberger is only concerned with allowing a wearer to extend their hair

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rearwardly of the hat. That is, a wearer of Kronenberger's hat would only be able to extend the hair on or near the rear part of their head through the opening provided therein. A person with an accumulation of front bangs would find Kronenberger's hat awkward to wear because they would have to either tuck their bangs up under the front of the cap (which may be hot and uncomfortable), part their bangs on either side of the front of the cap (which would not necessarily keep their bangs out of their eyes), or crush/flatten the bangs down upon the forehead which would not only be uncomfortable, but would cause the forehead to sweat and leave a crease across the bangs when the hat was removed. Additionally, a person who desires to ventilate the front portion of their head for the purpose of remaining cool would be unable to do so with Kronenberger's hat. Furthermore, Kronenberger's hat does not shade a wearer's face and eyes and contemporaneously deflect their front bangs.

With the above shortcomings in mind, it is a general object of the present invention to provide a cap for wearing with an unoccluded aperture, or opening, allowing a wearer to extend their front bangs therethrough. The provided opening, therefore, exposes the bangs region of the wearer's hairline.

It is another object to provide a brimmed cap with an aperture for allowing a wearer to extend their front bangs therethrough, wherein the aperture is positioned so that the brim shields or protects a wearer from the sun, and contemporaneously deflects the wearer's bangs from around their face.

It is another object to provide a sports cap which provides an individual who is taking part in sporting events with increased visibility by shielding their eyes from sunlight and keeping their hair out of their eyes.

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It is yet another object to provide a cap which is comfortable and stylish to wear, and simple and inexpensive to manufacture.

The invention achieves these and other objects in the form of a cap which includes a crown defining an opening for receiving the head of a wearer, a brim having an edge which is connected to the crown, and an aperture in the crown adjacent the brim for allowing an accumulation of the wearer's hair to extend therethrough and be deflected, while contemporaneously providing shade for the wearer's face.

These and additional objects and advantages of the present invention will be more readily understood after a consideration of the drawings and the detailed description of the preferred embodiment.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a front elevation of a cap (headwear) constructed according to one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 2 is an isometric view of the cap constructed according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention, shown in place on the head of a wearer W.

Fig. 3 is a side elevation of the cap shown in Figs. 1-2.

Fig. 4 is a side elevation showing a second embodiment of the cap of the present invention.

Fig. 5 is a side elevation showing a third embodiment of the cap of the present invention.

Figs. 6-7 are side elevational views like that of the third embodiment shown in Fig. 5, except that each figure shows how the visor or brim section of the cap is movable

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bidirectionally vertically via the novel attachment location of the head-covering section relative to the visor.

Fig. 8 is an enlarged, fragmentary section of the cap shown in Fig. 7.

Fig. 9 is a side elevation showing a fourth embodiment of the cap of the present invention.

Fig. 10 is a side elevation showing only the head-covering section of the fourth embodiment of the cap of the present invention.

Fig. 11 is a side elevation showing an alternate version of the head-covering section of the fourth embodiment of the cap of the present invention.

Fig. 12 is a side elevation showing only the visor section of the fourth embodiment of the cap of the present invention.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments of the Invention

Referring now to the drawings, and specifically to Figs. 1-3, a cap or hat is shown generally at 10 being constructed according to the first preferred embodiment of the present invention. For reasons to be described below, cap 10 is preferably a baseball-style sports hat and is useful for wearer W (see Fig. 2) who participates in outdoor sports such as golf and tennis. It will be understood, however, that while cap 10 is described in the context of sports settings, the cap derives utility in many other sports and non-sports settings which will also be evident from the description below.

As shown in Figs. 1-3, cap 10 includes a head-covering section or crown 12 defining a generally circular opening 14 for receiving the head of a wearer W. Crown 12 which is designed to fit snugly against the head as shown in Fig. 2, includes a front 16 (Fig. 1) and a back ,or rear, 18 (Fig. 3), and is preferably a dome-like structure formed from a

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plurality of panels, such as those representative ones shown at 20a through 20d in Fig. 1. The panels are joined or connected together, such as by suitable stitching, in a side-by-side fashion and each panel includes a bottom edge, the collective edges defining, in part, opening 14. Preferably, the panels are generally triangularly-shape so that when they are joined together in side-by-side fashion, the apexes of each triangle converge to define the top of cap 10 where a suitable button 22 anchors the panel apexes or tips together. It will be appreciated, however, that the panels may be any suitable shape, and even more generally, they may be eliminated all together in favor of a generally integrally-formed dome-like structure. In the first preferred embodiment, the panels are formed from any suitable fabric material from which baseball-style caps are usually formed, such materials being readily apparent to those of skill in the art. Additionally, the panels may or may not be formed from the same type of fabric material. For example, panels of varying fabric type would provide a unique and changing-textured surface which might be desirable for certain wearers. Additionally, panels may be formed from different types of material such as plastic webbed material or mesh for providing not only a lightweight construction but increasing the cap's ventilation.

Crown 12 additionally includes in its front what is referred to herein as elongate edge structure 13. Opposite ends of edge structure 13 are located at regions shown at 15 and 17 in Figs. 1-3.

Preferably, cap 10 includes a conventional visor or brim ~~section-structure 24~~ having a brim portion an edge 26 and a lip, or band portion, 26a, a portion of which. ~~Brim structure 24~~ is joined ~~or connected~~ to crown 12 adjacent the crown's front ~~bottom-edge~~, such as by stitching. It will be appreciated, however, that any suitable manner of joining or connecting the brim will suffice. As shown in Fig. 3, brim , or brim structure, section (or brim) 24 extends ~~from edge 26~~, forwardly of crown 12 and defines the front of the cap. ~~An upstanding lip Lip 26a~~ extends generally upwardly from a region of joinder 26b with brim portion 26 edge 26 and stabilizes the cap, as well as supporting wearer W's front bangs as will become evident below. It will be understood, however, that brim ~~structure 24~~ may extend

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further around the cap than is shown, and may, for example, extend completely around the cap for contemporaneously shading the wearer's eyes, ears, and neck. The upper edge 26c in lip 26a constitutes what is referred to herein as elongate rear, or inner, edge structure in brim structure 24. Edge structure 26c includes opposite ends which meet contactively as shown at regions 15, 17 with the opposite ends of edge structure 13. A front or outer edge structure in brim 24 is shown at 27, spaced from rear inner edge structure 26c.

An unoccluded aperture 28, which is defined and bounded by edge structures 13, 26c is provided in the front of crown 12 near[,] and preferably adjacent brim structure 24 for allowing an accumulation of a wearer's hair, and more specifically a wearer's front bangs from the bangs region of the wearer's hairline, to extend therethrough for a purpose which is described in more detail below. In the first preferred embodiment, aperture 28 is elongate, and one of the long sides thereof extends generally along a substantial length of brim 24, the aperture being sized and configured to allow an accumulation of hair, e.g. the wearer's front bangs, to extend therethrough. The aperture may be any suitable shape such as circular, triangular, rectangular, star-shaped, or any other desirable shape dimensioned for allowing wearer W's front bangs to extend therethrough. However, in the first preferred embodiment the aperture assumes the shape shown, which might be characterized as being defined by a generally flat side (corresponding to that portion of the aperture which lies adjacent brim 24), and a generally arcuate side connected to the ends of the flat side, and spaced therefrom in a direction away from brim 24.

In the first preferred embodiment, aperture 28 is formed by portions of panels 20 a-d which have been removed. Such removed portions may either be removed after the cap's panels have been joined together, or before the panels are joined together. That is, the panels may be first joined together, and then have a portion cut away to form the aperture, or portions of panels 20a-d may be specifically formed with corresponding portions removed for defining the aperture.

An important consequence of the contact meeting, at regions 15, 17, of the opposite ends of edge structures 13, 26c is that when cap 10 is worn, these edge structures will lie directly against the head, effectively to seal the perimeter of opening 28 against airflow through the

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cap, and inside thereof over and around the head. They provide this seal while still allowing the bangs of a wearer to extend freely through opening 28.

As will be seen, all other embodiments of the invention shown and described herein possess this same important “edge-end-meeting” structural feature, including embodiments wherein a crown and brim structure are selectively separable (i.e., coupleable and uncoupleable). A simple look at other embodiments of the invention pictured in the other drawing figures herein still to be discussed will clearly show the presence of this aperture/opening-related feature.

Figs. 1 and 2 show an adjustable member 30 in the form of a standard two-part mated strap which includes a portion 32 having plural apertures therein (Fig. 1), and a portion 34

In Operation

Fig. 3 shows cap 10 in place on the head of a wearer who is indicated in phantom lines. Cap 10 is placed on the head much like any baseball-style cap with one important difference. When placing cap 10 on the head, the wearer should ensure that their front bangs are allowed to extend through aperture 28 so that they are not mashed down by the front of the cap. In Fig. 3, the wearer's bangs may be seen to extend through aperture 28 adjacent brim 24. When cap 10 is on the head of a wearer, brim 24 is positioned for not only providing shade for the wearer's face and eyes, but deflecting an accumulation of hair extending from aperture 28. That is, because of the aperture's proximity to brim 24, the brim is positioned for contemporaneously providing shade for the wearer's face and eyes, as well as deflecting the wearer's hair from around their face and eyes.

This is important for a number of reasons. First, wearer's taking part in athletics such as golf and tennis usually do so outside where it may be sunny and bright. It is desirable when taking part in such activities, to have one's eyes and face shaded so that, for example, a golf shot or a tennis shot may be made, free from the distracting glare of the sun. Second, it is desirable when taking part in such activities, to do so without one's hair falling into one's face and providing a distraction. The present invention provides a cap which not only shades a wearer's eyes and face from the sun's distracting glare, but it also prevents a wearer's hair from interfering with their view. Furthermore, aperture 28 , with its defining edges seated against the head, provides a ventilation port for keeping the front of a wearer's head cool when participating in outdoor activities on hot days while at the same time effectively being sealed around its perimeter against airflow through the aperture to the inside of the cap . In addition, because the front bangs of the wearer are left substantially unencumbered, there is no crease left in the wearer's bangs when the hat is removed. Furthermore, the cap shades the top of the